

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR RESTRICTING DHCP SERVERS

RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present invention is related to the subject matter of the following commonly assigned, copending United States patent applications: serial no. 10/674,776 (Attorney Docket No. RPS920030115US2) entitled "Method and System for Restricting PXE Servers" and filed September 30, 2003. The content of the above-referenced application is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Technical Field

[0001] The present invention relates in general to the field of computers, and in particular to multiple blade servers housed in a server chassis. Still more particularly, the present invention relates to a method and system for filtering, through a secure remote supervisor, responses from Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) servers to a blade server's request for network configuration parameters, such that responses to the request for configuration parameters are only accepted from trusted DHCP servers.

2. Description of the Related Art

[0002] Server blade computers offer multiple server blades (boards) in a single chassis (blade chassis). Although each server blade may be under at least partial control of a primary server blade in the chassis, each server blade typically functions as an independent server to specific clients. A typical arrangement of such a system is shown in **Figure 1**, in which a blade chassis **102**, having multiple server blades **103a-c**, is connected to a network **106**, which connects to multiple clients **104**.

[0003] In order to initially connect to network **106**, each of the server blades **103** may utilize a network identification protocol known as Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP). DHCP allows each server blade **103** to obtain an Internet Protocol (IP) network address and other configuration parameters from a DHCP server in a configuration servers network **108**.

[0004] To initialize on the network **106**, a server blade **103** broadcasts a request for configuration parameters to configuration servers network **108**. One or more of the DHCP servers in configuration servers network **108** responds back to server blade **103** with a dynamic IP address along with lease information and other configuration parameters. If responses from multiple DHCP servers in configuration servers network **108** are put on network **106**, then server blade **103** typically responds to the first DHCP server response to arrive at server blade **103**.

[0005] A network initialization of server blade **103** as described is not secure, since the broadcasted configuration parameter request can result in a response from any DHCP server connected to server blade **103**, including an unauthorized DHCP server attempting mischief. What is needed, therefore, is a method and system that prevents server blade initialization by an unauthorized DHCP server.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention is directed to a method and system for managing a secure configuration of a server blade on a network. The server blade has a Remote Supervisor Adapter (RSA) card, which contains a list of trusted Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) servers. A remote manager, which communicates with the RSA card via a hyper-secure network, maintains the list of trusted DHCP servers on the RSA card. When the server blade broadcasts a request for configuration parameters to connect to the network, a responsive offer is returned from a DHCP server. If the responding DHCP server is not on the list of trusted DHCP servers contained in the RSA card, then the offer is refused, and another DHCP server's offer is evaluated.

[0007] The above, as well as additional objectives, features, and advantages of the present invention will become apparent in the following detailed written description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] The novel features believed characteristic of the invention are set forth in the appended claims. The invention itself, however, as well as a preferred mode of use, further purposes and advantages thereof, will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, where:

[0009] **Figure 1** depicts a prior art diagram of a network connecting a server blade computer (blade chassis) to a network of Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) servers;

[0010] **Figure 2a** illustrates a computer system utilizing the present invention;

[0011] **Figure 2b** depicts details of software used by a server blade in the computer system shown in Figure 2a; and

[0012] **Figure 3** is a flow-chart of steps taken in a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0013] With reference now to **Figure 2a**, there is depicted a block diagram of a data processing system in which a preferred embodiment of the present invention may be implemented. Data processing system **200** includes multiple server blades, including a depicted server blade **203**. Each server blade **203** includes a processor **202**, which is preferably a plurality of processors (multi-processors) operating in a coordinated manner. Processor **202** is connected to a system bus **208**. In the exemplary embodiment, server blade **203** includes a graphics adapter **204**, also connected to system bus **208**, for providing interface information on display **206**.

[0014] Also connected to system bus **208** are system memory **210** and input/output (I/O) bus bridge **212**. I/O bus bridge **212** couples I/O bus **214** to system bus **208**, relaying and/or transforming data transactions from one bus to the other. Peripheral devices such as nonvolatile storage **216**, which may be a hard disk drive, floppy drive, a compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM), a digital video disk (DVD) drive, or the like, and input device **218**, which may include a conventional mouse, a trackball, or the like, are connected to I/O bus **214**. Server blade **203** communicates to network **106** via a network interface card (NIC) **226** and to a hyper-secure Remote Supervisor Adapter (RSA) network **224** via an RSA card **222** as shown.

[0015] The exemplary embodiment shown in **Figure 2a** is provided solely for the purposes of explaining the invention and those skilled in the art will recognize that numerous variations are possible, both in form and function. For instance, data processing system **200** might also include a sound card and audio speakers, and numerous other optional components. All such variations are believed to be within the spirit and scope of the present invention.

[0016] **Figure 2b** illustrates details of software used by server blade **203** in the present invention. An operating system (O/S) **236** includes a network device driver **234**, which obtains and utilizes an IP address obtained from a DHCP server. Control over whether to accept the IP address is determined by RSA device driver **232**, which determines whether the IP address is acceptable according to which DHCP server supplied the address. This determination is based on a list of trusted DHCP servers **230** maintained in RSA card **222**. RSA card **222** and the list of

trusted DHCP servers **230** are preferably under the control of a remote configuration server or manager (not shown) communicating with server blade **203** via hyper-secure RSA network **224**.

[0017] **Figure 3** is a flow-chart of a preferred embodiment of the present invention. A request is sent out to a network (e.g., configuration server network **108** shown in **Figure 2**) requesting a DHCP set-up (block **302**). A DHCP set-up provides configuration parameters to the server blades. DHCP is an extension of BOOTP, an IP allocation specification. DHCP supports the concept of a “lease” of an IP address, in which a DHCP server allocates an IP address to the server blade for a pre-determined period of time. The server blade broadcasts a DHCPDISCOVER packet to the network of DHCP servers. DHCP servers on the network detect the broadcast and return a DHCPOFFER packet that contains an offered IP address for the blade server and other configuration information (block **304**). The DHCP servers conduct preliminary testing before offering the addresses, such as determining if the offered IP address is already in use by another node on the network.

[0018] The server blade might receive multiple DHCPOFFER packets from different DHCP servers. According to the present invention, rather than simply accepting the first DHCPOFFER packet received, the server blade compares the IP address of the responding DHCP server, found in the DHCPOFFER packet, with the list of trusted DHCP servers in the RSA card (block **306**). If multiple DHCPOFFER packets are received from a legitimate DHCP server, the server blade selects one of the DHCPOFFER packets based on some predetermined criteria, such as which packet was received first, which packet offers the longest lease, or which DHCP server provides the most information that the specific server blade needs for optimal operation. After selecting the preferred DHCP packet, the server blade sends out a DHCPREQUEST packet to the DHCP server that sent the selected DHCPOFFER packet. Assuming that the offer is still valid, the chosen DHCP server then returns a DHCPACK acknowledgment packet that tells the server blade that the lease is finalized (block **308**), turning over ownership and maintenance of the lease to the server blade.

[0019] If a DHCPOFFER is from an unauthorized DHCP server not on the trusted list, DHCP controlled IP address allocation and set-up is blocked (block 310) and an administrator is notified, via a Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP) trap, of the presence of an unauthorized DHCP server on the network (block 312). A choice is then made (decision block 314) as to whether to receive and evaluate another DHCPOFFER (block 314). If not, then a decision is made whether to send a DHCPREQUEST directly to one of the trusted DHCP servers, preferably a DHCP server on a local secure LAN (blocks 316 and 318). If so, then that trusted server provides network configuration parameters as described above.

[0020] The present invention thus provides the means and method for a computer to connect to an open network under the control of a remote supervisor. By controlling and maintaining the list of trusted DHCP servers, the remote supervisor is able to control if and how a specific blade server connects to a network. This allows the remote supervisor to control the IP address, domain name, and other network configuration parameters in order to have an orderly arranged network.. While the present invention focuses on server blades, it is understood that any computer, particularly those with remote supervisor capabilities, utilizing the described invention is within the purpose and scope of the present invention.

[0021] It should be understood that at least some aspects of the present invention may alternatively be implemented in a program product. Programs defining functions on the present invention can be delivered to a data storage system or a computer system via a variety of signal-bearing media, which include, without limitation, non-writable storage media (e.g., CD-ROM), writable storage media (e.g., a floppy diskette, hard disk drive, read/write CD ROM, optical media), and communication media, such as computer and telephone networks including Ethernet. It should be understood, therefore in such signal-bearing media when carrying or encoding computer readable instructions that direct method functions in the present invention, represent alternative embodiments of the present invention. Further, it is understood that the present invention may be implemented by a system having means in the form of hardware, software, or a combination of software and hardware as described herein or their equivalent.

[0022] While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to a preferred embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and detail may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.